

Students

Homeless Students

The Board shall make reasonable efforts to identify homeless children and youths within the district, encourage their enrollment in school and eliminate existing barriers to their education, which may exist in district policies or practices, in compliance with all applicable federal and state laws.

Further, it is the policy of the Board of Education that no child or youth shall be discriminated against or stigmatized in this school district because of homelessness. Homeless students, as defined by federal and state statutes, residing within the district or residing in temporary shelters in the district are entitled to free school privileges.

Homeless students shall not be separated from the mainstream school environment on the basis of their homelessness. Such students shall have access to education and other services they need to meet the same challenging State academic standards to which all students are held.

Homeless students within the district not placed in a shelter remain the district's responsibility to provide continued educational services. Such services for the child may be:

1. continued in the school ("school of origin") that the student attended when permanently housed or the school of last enrollment; or
2. provided in the school that is attended by other students living in the same attendance area where the homeless child lives.

To the extent feasible, a homeless child will be kept in the school of origin, unless it is against the wishes of the parent/guardian. If placement in the school of origin is not feasible, the homeless student must be placed in the school that is attended by other students living in the same attendance area in which the homeless child lives.

The District will provide a written explanation, including the right to appeal, whenever the District sends a homeless student to a school other than the school of origin, a school requested by the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth.

Homeless children shall be provided educational services that are comparable to those provided to other students enrolled in the District, including but not limited to, Title I, transportation services, compensatory educational programs, gifted and talented, special education, ESL, health services and food and nutrition programs, and preschools operated by the District, if they meet the established criteria for these services.

The Superintendent of Schools shall refer identified homeless children under the age of eighteen who may reside within the school district, unless such children are emancipated minors, to the Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF).

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Homeless Students (continued)

The district administration shall attempt to remove existing barriers to school attendance by homeless emancipated minors and youth eighteen years of age:

1. The selected school for the homeless child shall enroll the child, even in the absence of records normally required for enrollment. The last school enrolled shall be contacted to obtain records.
2. Other enrollment requirements that may constitute a barrier to the education of the homeless child or youth may be waived at the discretion of the Superintendent. If the district is unable to determine the student's grade level due to missing or incomplete records, the district shall administer tests or utilize other reasonable means to determine the appropriate grade level for the child.
3. Fees and charges, which may present a barrier to the enrollment or transfer of a homeless child or youth, may be waived at the discretion of the Superintendent.
4. Transportation services must be comparable to those provided other students in the selected school. Transportation shall be provided to the student's school of origin in compliance with federal and state regulations. If the school of origin is in a different school district from where the homeless child or youth is currently living, both school districts shall agree on a method for sharing the responsibility and costs, or share the costs equally.
5. Official school records policies and regulations shall be waived at the discretion of the Superintendent, in compliance with federal statutes.
6. The district shall make a reasonable effort to locate immunization records from information available. The District's liaison shall assist the parent/guardian in obtaining the necessary immunizations and records. The District shall arrange for students to receive immunizations through health agencies and at District expense if no other recourse is available. Immunizations may, however, be waived for homeless youth only in accordance with provisions of Board of Education policy on immunizations.
7. The Board will provide any homeless student, who is not in the physical custody of a parent/guardian, full access to his/her educational records, including medical records, in the Board's possession.
8. Other barriers to school attendance by homeless children or youth may be waived at the discretion of the Superintendent of Schools.
9. The District will treat information about a homeless child or youth's living situation as a student education record subject to the protections of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Such information shall not be deemed to be directory information.

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Homeless Students (continued)

The District's educational liaison for homeless children is the Superintendent and/or designee. The liaison must assist homeless children and youth, as described within the administrative regulations, in the placement/enrollment decisions, considering the youth's wishes and provide notice of appeal under the Act's enrollment disputes provisions. The liaison shall also participate in State provided professional development programs for local liaisons.

Students residing in a temporary shelter are entitled to free school privileges from the district in which the shelter is located or from the school district where they would otherwise reside if not for the placement in the temporary shelter. The district in which the temporary shelter is located shall notify the district where the student would otherwise be attending. The district so notified may choose to either:

1. continue to provide educational services, including transportation between the temporary shelter and the school in the home district; or
2. pay tuition to the district in which the temporary shelter is located.

The Superintendent shall develop regulations, to ensure compliance with applicable statutes in the implementation of this policy.

(cf. 5143 - Student Health Assessments and Immunizations)

(cf. 5146 - Child Abuse and Neglect)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-253(e) School privileges for children in certain placements, non-resident children and children in temporary shelters. (as amended by PA 17-194)

17a-101 Protection of children from abuse. Reports required of certain professional persons. When child may be removed from surroundings without court order.

17a-103 Reports by others.

17a-106 Cooperation in relation to prevention, identification and treatment of child abuse and neglect.

46b-120 Definitions.

PA 17-194 An Act Concerning Access to Student Records for Certain Unaccompanied Youths

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Homeless Students (continued)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes (continued)

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, (PL 107-110-Sec 1032) 42 U.S.C. §11431-11435, as amended by the ESSA, P.L. 114-95.

Federal Register: McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youths Program, Vol. 81, No. 52, 3/17/2016.

Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (section 438 of the General Education Provisions Act, as amended, added by section 513 of P.L. 93-568, codified at 20 U.S.C. 1232g.)

Dept. of Educ. 34 C.F.R. Part 99 (May 9, 1980 45 FR 30802) regs. Implementing FERPA enacted as part of 438 of General Educ. Provisions Act (20 U.S.C. 1232g) parent and student privacy and other rights with respect to educational records, as amended 11/21/96, and Final Rule 34 CFR Part 99, December 9, 2008, December 2, 2011.

Policy adopted: February 12, 2018

THOMASTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Thomaston, Connecticut

Students

Homeless Students

In order to appropriately implement the policy pertaining to homeless children, youth and students placed in shelters, in compliance with all applicable federal and state statutes, the following regulations are established.

Definitions:

Homeless students are federally defined as “individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.” This definition includes the following types of students who are:

- a. sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason;
- b. living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
- c. living in emergency or transitional shelters;
- d. abandoned in hospitals;
- e. awaiting foster care placement;
- f. have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
- g. living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, bus or train stations, or similar settings;
- h. migratory children living in the above described circumstances.

Connecticut’s residency definitions contained in C.G.S. 10-235(d) defines non-residency as children residing with relatives or non-relatives, when it is the intention of such relatives or non-relatives and of the children or their parents or guardians that such residence is to be (1) permanent, (2) provided without pay and (3) not for the sole purpose of obtaining school accommodations. In addition, C.G.S. 10-253(e) indicates that children in temporary shelters are entitled to free school privileges from either the school district in which the shelter is located or from the school district in which the child would otherwise reside, if not for the need for temporary shelter. The district has an obligation to identify homeless and migratory children.

District Obligations Regarding Placement of Homeless Students:

- a. The District must continue the student’s education in the “school of origin” which is the school the child attended when permanently housed or the school of last enrollment. **OR**
- b. The District must enroll the homeless student in any public school that non-homeless students who live in the area where the child is actually living are eligible to attend.

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District Obligations Regarding Placement of Homeless Students (continued):

- c. The District is required, “to the extent feasible” to keep the homeless child in the school of origin unless it is against the wishes of the parent/guardian.
- d. The homeless child’s right to attend the school of origin extends for the duration of homelessness.
- e. If a child becomes permanently housed during the academic year, he/she is entitled to stay in the school of origin until the end of the school year.
- f. A child who becomes homeless in between academic years is entitled to attend his/her school of origin for the following academic year.
- g. The District must provide written explanation, including the right to appeal, whenever the school District sends the homeless child to a school other than the school of origin or a school requested by the parent/guardian.
- h. With an “unaccompanied youth,” the District’s homeless liaison must assist in the placement/enrollment decisions, considering the youth’s wishes, and provide notice of appeal under the Act’s enrollment disputes provision.

Appeal Procedures:

- a. C.G.S. 10-186 currently defines the process for resolving issues involving homeless students. The state is required to establish an appeal process.
- b. Federal law requires school districts to allow homeless students to “stay put.” “The child shall be immediately admitted to the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute.”
- c. The District’s homeless liaison shall carry out the dispute resolution process expeditiously and, in the case of an unaccompanied youth, ensure that the youth is immediately enrolled in school pending the resolution of the dispute.

Educational Services to be Provided to Homeless Students:

- 1. Educational services are to be comparable to those received by other students in the school.
- 2. Such students may be entitled to such services as Title I, state/local remedial programs, special education, limited English proficiency, vocational education, gifted/talented and school nutrition programs.
- 3. Homelessness alone is not to be considered a sufficient reason to separate students from the mainstream school environment.
- 4. Homeless students may be segregated for short periods of time only for health and safety emergencies or to provide temporary, special or supplemental services.

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Transportation Obligations of the School District for Homeless Students:

1. Services must be comparable to those provided other students in the selected school.
2. Homeless students must be provided transportation to the school of origin, if requested by the parent/guardian, if the school is within the school district.
3. If the school of origin is in a different school district from where the child is currently living, both school districts are to agree on a method for sharing the responsibility and costs, or share the costs equally.

Enrollment Requests from Homeless Parents:

1. The selected school is required to immediately enroll the child, even in the absence of records normally required for enrollment. Parents/guardians may be required to submit contact information.
2. The last school attended must be contacted to obtain records.
3. If the child lacks immunizations or immunization/medical records, the enrolling school **MUST** refer the parent/guardian to the liaison in order to get help obtaining immunizations and records.

District Liaison for Homeless Students:

The District's liaison for homeless students is Superintendent and/or designee.

The duties of the local liaison are:

- a. Ensure homeless children and youth are identified by school personnel and through coordination with other agencies and entities.
- b. Ensure homeless children enroll in and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in the school district's schools.
- c. Ensure that homeless families and children receive educational services for which they are eligible, including Head Start, Even Start, preschool programs, and referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health services, and other appropriate services.
- d. Parents/guardians are informed of educational and related opportunities available to their children, and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children.
- e. Ensure that public notice of the educational rights of homeless children are disseminated where such children receive services. (For example, family shelters, soup kitchens, and schools)

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District Liaison for Homeless Students (continued):

- f. Ensure that enrollment disputes are mediated.
- g. Parent/guardian is fully informed of all transportation services, including to the school of origin, and is assisted in accessing those services.
- h. Must assist unaccompanied youth in placement/enrollment decisions, including considering the youth's wishes in those decisions, and providing notice to the youth of the right to appeal such decisions.
- i. Must assist children who do not have immunizations, or immunization or medical records, to obtain necessary immunizations, or immunization or medical records.
- j. Must collaborate and coordinate with state coordinators and community and school personnel responsible for the provision of education and related services to homeless children.